

Amendment Act, and I am encouraged that Members of both parties see the need for this legislation.

As a country, we have made incredible progress in expanding the right to vote to previously disenfranchised populations. Now is not the time to turn the clock back. We should, instead, be moving forward, ever forward, and encouraging legal, eligible voters to fully participate in their government, in democracy, and in voting—not working to exclude them.

Congress must commit to passing the Voting Rights Amendment Act and ensuring that the ballot boxes in our States, in our Nation, and in our democracy remain open to all.

#### CENTRAL ALABAMA VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with this Congress and with this Nation a story of mismanagement, malfeasance, negligence, and coverup at the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System, or CAVHCS.

I know most of my colleagues can point to at least some problems at the VA systems in their State. But what has transpired in my hometown of Montgomery, Alabama, and central Alabama rises to a level of misconduct and mistrust I am not sure many other systems can match. And I do this not simply just to disparage the system for no reason. I do this to shine a light on some truly disturbing practices so we can finally clean up the mess. I do this so that the 50,000-plus veterans that depend on the Central Alabama VA can one day have confidence in the health care system we promised them.

After Phoenix, when the scheduling scheme began to unravel, it was revealed in early June that the Central Alabama VA had one of the worst wait times in the country. It was particularly bad for mental health patients.

I actually met with our local VA director, who acknowledged the discrepancies and tried to reassure me by leading me to believe that action had been taken to remove those responsible. It turns out that wasn't true. No one was fired. Mr. Speaker, if a Member of Congress can't get a straight answer from the VA, imagine what our veterans go through every single day.

In the wake of this clear breach of trust, we began digging deeper to find out what was really going on at the Central Alabama VA. The information that we received from sources who came forward was alarming. It is also consistent with reports gathered by independent inspectors and some great investigative reporters.

Here is what is being uncovered:

A Montgomery VA pulmonologist manipulated more than 1,200 patient records to show tests that never occurred. After being caught, the doctor was never fired or suspended. He actu-

ally was caught manipulating records again but somehow went on to receive a "satisfactory" performance review;

At least 900 unread patient X-ray tests, many showing malignancies, were lost over a 5-year period. When the tests were discovered recently, top hospital administrators tried to cover up the problem;

Email records show the Central Alabama VA director was alerted to the concerns over patient scheduling practices more than 8 months before taking action;

And finally, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the strongest evidence yet has emerged that the rampant scheduling manipulation at Central Alabama wasn't a misunderstanding at all but, rather, a facility-led standard operating procedure. More than 57 percent of staff surveyed at Central Alabama said they received "instruction" to manipulate patient wait times, 57 percent. Mr. Speaker, that is off the charts. The national average is 12.7 percent, and other systems near Montgomery aren't even close.

There is clearly a systematic problem in Montgomery, and it needs to be corrected. That is why I have joined with Senator RICHARD SHELBY to write the new Secretary of Veterans Administration, Robert McDonald, to call his attention to the Central Alabama VA. Specifically, Senator SHELBY and I are asking Secretary McDonald to review these instances of mismanagement, visit CAVHCS with us, and develop a plan of action to reform the Central Alabama system.

It is so important to remember that thousands of doctors, nurses, and public servants at the VA work very hard every day to give veteran patients the best health care that we can offer. Their service is honorable, and it is a shame that it is overshadowed now by a system that too often fails those it was created to help.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow the American people to forget about this. We cannot allow the news media to move on to the next story. I hear from veterans every day who are depending on us to make this right. This will be an uphill battle. I know that. But it is a fight we have to fight. We have to change this culture of complacency. That starts with new leadership, and I look forward to working with Secretary McDonald.

#### THE BORDER CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of weeks, many of us have visited my home State and have gone to places where I have gone over the decades of service and living in Texas, and that is to our great neighbors who live on the border. Many great citizens of the State of Texas and of the great country in which we live, they have lived and worked and played,

and they have created an economic engine, cities like Brownsville, Laredo, Harlingen, McAllen, and many others. And they have, in fact, experienced over the years an influx of individuals coming to do harm.

As a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and a member who has served as chairwoman and ranking member on a number of subcommittees, we have made great strides.

I am reminded of the low number of Border Patrol agents some many years ago, and now we are upwards to 25,000 hardworking Americans who serve on both the northern and southern borders.

They have met the challenge of a serious influx. First, the drug cartels. The violence on the Mexican side of the border. We have come together with Mexican Presidents and have worked with the Mexican national defense forces, and we have quashed, to a certain extent, the extensive violence. But yet, our Federal agents of the ATF, the DEA, FBI, and certainly other collaborative efforts have worked to bring this violence down.

We take note of the fact that El Paso is noted as the safest city in the United States, and it is on the border. We note that a great deal of commerce comes through the southern border, as it does the northern border.

Over the last couple of weeks, beginning maybe in 2013, we saw a new phenomenon, an unplanned phenomenon, a phenomenon driven by the devastating and destructive elements found in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Central America, none of which were driven by a pointed pronouncement from the United States or the President of the United States, President Barack Obama. But elements who wanted to misuse and abuse the need for comprehensive immigration reform decided to misrepresent the laws of the United States of America.

Every Member of Congress has adhered to a particular theme. I started using it in the 1990s. We are a Nation of laws and a Nation of immigrants. And the laws are intended to be used to instruct how we guide our hearts and our laws. We still have the Statue of Liberty in the harbor of New York that says, we welcome the forlorn and those who are in need.

Unfortunately, bad information was given to desperate people. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker: desperate people. Desperate mothers and fathers who saw the beheading of young people, or people in their neighborhood threatened by MS-13 and other horrific gangs who say, if your child does not join, your child will be killed, or your little girl will be raped. Or maybe the 3-year-old that I saw down in Brownsville with a diaper on was given to someone just to save her life.

That is the misnomer and the abuse that has been going on in the debate

here. These are the real lives of children who fled with a more than credible fear of the loss of life. I am so disappointed sometimes in how we can reinvent truth, and that is that these children are fleeing because of what President Obama represented. That is not true. And it is important to tell the American people the truth.

They were fleeing because of the sheer unbelievable violence, insane violence, mixed in with the mistruths and misrepresentations of those who just wanted to make money and abuse the system. So now we have the surge, maybe 50,000 plus here in the United States. And we have to do something about it.

I listened to three young people yesterday. Most of us have not heard from the children because we were protecting the children's privacy. But these youngsters explained the arduous journey that they took and how they came here for nothing more than a better life, and that violence was all around them.

Yes, we need to work with Honduras and Guatemala and El Salvador. But we started out trying to do what was right. The President offered a supplemental. He knew it was right to have funding for the wilderness funding. He knew it was right to give the Border Patrol agents their appropriate monies, and he knew it was right for enforcement to add more judges.

But what I would say is, what we have on the floor now, Mr. Speaker, is a pitiful example in H.R. 5230. This is a bad emergency supplemental. It is not even that. It is not worth voting for. America is better than this, and we need to do better than this with the supplemental to help these children and help America.

#### AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, to begin my short statement today, I would like to read you a recent headline from The Washington Times: "Golden Hammer: U.S. squandered \$34 million on failed Afghan soybean project." The first few sentences of this report read: "Call it the great American soybean heist, the latest tale of U.S. taxpayer abuse to emanate from Afghanistan. Despite clear evidence that Afghanistan's arid soil was a bad place to grow soybeans, the U.S. Department of Agriculture spent \$34.4 million trying to establish the crop in that country, according to the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction."

Mr. Speaker, here we go again, talking about the waste, fraud, and abuse of American resources in Afghanistan.

Yesterday I spoke on the House floor in memory of three members of the United States Army who died as a result of their service in Afghanistan. The deaths of these three men rep-

resent my greatest concern with our servicemembers continuing to remain in Afghanistan: that more and more of our men and women in uniform will be killed and wounded.

The loss of life and limb is far more important than the money that is being wasted. However, Mr. Speaker, our country is in a dangerous financial situation.

In addition to the soybean report, I want to read three more headlines that accentuate the waste of our taxpayer money in Afghanistan. From CBS News: "Is the Pentagon wasting taxpayer money in Afghanistan?" From the Center for Public Integrity: "The U.S. military was no match for Afghanistan's corruption." And from the World Affairs Journal: "Money pit: The monstrous failure of U.S. aid to Afghanistan."

Mr. Speaker, how much more can the poor American taxpayer continue to spend on a failed policy in Afghanistan? I cannot emphasize enough that we have children, senior citizens, and veterans here at home that desperately need our assistance, yet we run out of money for their programs because we refuse to make cuts to the funds that are being funneled overseas, and especially in Afghanistan.

I say to the administration and to Congress that it is time to fix America's problems, not Afghanistan's problems, and not the world's problems.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want, again, to mention the three Army soldiers who were killed last week on July 25: Staff Sergeant Benjamin G. Prange, PFC Keith M. Williams, and PFC Donnell A. Hamilton, Jr.

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Mr. Speaker, beside me, I have poster after poster of the cost of war. As a young kid named Tyler Jordan—this is actually from 2003, our early days in Iraq, a very unnecessary war—his father was a gunny sergeant named Phillip Jordan, and he was killed, and here is Tyler being given the flag that was folded after it was taken off his father's grave.

I don't know how many of these three names I just mentioned—I know one family, he had two little girls, maybe they got a folded flag—but it is time for Congress to wake up.

There is no need to have our young men and women overseas giving their life and limb and to see the money wasted overseas in fraud, waste, and abuse when we can use it right here to fix America's problems.

Please, God, continue to bless our men and women in uniform; and please, God, continue to bless America.

#### THE FUTILITY OF LITIGATING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, with just 1 day before the recess and many pend-

ing issues before us, the majority has focused on one issue and one issue alone: suing the President of the United States for essentially doing what they seem incapable of.

The lawsuit focuses solely on a small part of the ACA, one that Republicans themselves wanted to roll back. I am going to list my objections to this monumental waste of time on this poster.

First is standing. The S is for standing because the Speaker is trying to sue the President, and he does not have standing. He must show that there is some concrete harm to him that goes beyond the general interest in seeing the law enforced.

In fact, he should listen to conservative legal minds like Justices Roberts, Scalia, and Rehnquist, all of whom have expressed skepticism about a court granting standing to the House to sue the President.

It is absurd to think that the House of Representatives, as an institution, has been harmed by President Obama's attempting in good faith to implement the ACA. I understand their feelings might be hurt, but acting out only gets them negative attention, and the Americans agree that this is a waste of time.

The next reason that I object is the taxpayer waste of money. The last time the Republicans sued the President, it was over the implementation of DOMA, which went nowhere and cost the taxpayers \$2.3 million. Like this previous fruitless lawsuit, this will bounce around the courts for years, making rich lawyers rich. That is the only jobs program the Republicans will have passed in Congress this year.

The next reason I object to it is that it is useless. Just what are the Republicans trying to accomplish with this circus? It is certainly not governing. As of June 30, this Congress has only enacted 125 bills into law—the lowest number of any Congress in history since 1973, when they started keeping data.

Now, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will say, well, it is all about the Senate, but in five previously divided Congresses before this one, the average number of bills enacted at the same time period was 254—almost twice as many.

The next reason I object to this lawsuit is P, political stunt aimed at appeasing the fringe elements in the Republican Party that want to impeach the President. The same people calling for this lawsuit shut down the government last fall because they wanted to delay the Affordable Care Act, and it cost us over \$24 billion. Now, they are suing the President over the fact that he did something they wanted him to do in the first place.

The only other group of people I know who scream that they want something and then throw a tantrum when they get it are toddlers.

The next reason I object to this lawsuit is that it is inconsistent. It is inconsistent because when George Bush